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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006000

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TAGS: MARR PGOV PREL PTER TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S FIRST CIVILIAN NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
SECRETARY-GENERAL IS SETTLING IN

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR ERIC. S. EDELMAN, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (S) Summary: In an October 15 introductory call by the Ambassador, Yigit Alpogan, the first civilian Secretary-General in the seventy year history of the Turkish

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National Security Council (NSC), outlined plans to downsize and further "civilianize" the NSC staff. Alpogan provided little substance on Turkey's security concerns, opining only that Turkey did not view Iran's nuclear program as an immediate threat and expressing the hope that the US would take action against the PKK once the US Presidential elections had passed. Alpogan's reticence to speak about Iraq and other priority issues for Turkey may be a function of his lack of tenure in the job or could signal further marginalization of the NSC as Turkey consolidates reforms in anticipation of an EU decision in December to start accession talks. It is too early to tell but we have an opportunity to help shape the NSC's development. As he settles into the job we may seek an APNSA Rice call Alpogan to congratulate him on his appointment and offer US assistance to his effort to restructure the NSC staff. End Summary.

CIVILIANIZING THE NSC

¶12. (C) Ambassador, accompanied by DCM and Acting POLMILCOUNS, called on Turkey's first civilian NSC Secretary-General, Yigit Alpogan, during his second week on the job. Alpogan, who was unaccompanied during the meeting, said he was still learning the organization's structure and didn't plan to make any immediate changes. However, he expected the current NSC staffing of 300 to decline and diversify from the traditional reliance on military personnel. In Alpogan's estimation, the military was already well-represented at the NSC and additional military personnel would be unnecessary. In line with that, Alpogan's Principal Deputy was a Major General, a downgrade from the three-star position it was when the SecGen position was held by a four-star general, and his other deputies were civilians with military backgrounds. In addition, Alpogan had requested from the MFA three foreign service officers to serve as personal advisors. In response to Ambassador's offer to share the USG experience in establishing a National Security Council and adjusting it to serve the needs of different administrations, Alpogan welcomed relevant historical information.

REGIONAL SECURITY

¶13. (S) In a discussion of Turkey's regional security issues, Alpogan revealed very little. When prompted by the Ambassador, Alpogan acknowledged there had been a high level discussion between the Prime Minister, the MFA and the Turkish General Staff on Turkey's concerns in Iraq, in which the NSC did not participate. He said the GOT was closely watching the US election process and hoped that the USG would take some steps against the PKK after November 2. Ambassador noted USG actions already taken to get the PKK listed as a terrorist organization by the EU and to engage the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) in a trilateral effort against the PKK. He emphasized that the USG took seriously Turkey's concerns about demographic changes in Kirkuk and that we had been working to counsel all sides. In response to Ambassador's mention of Coalition Provisional Authority Paul Bremer's discussions with Barzani and Talabani, Alpogan opined that guarantees from Barzani didn't mean much.

¶14. (S) Regarding Iran's nuclear program, Alpogan said the issue had not crossed his desk but, judging by Prime Minister Erdogan's September visit to Tehran, Turkey would try to convince Iran to cooperate with the IAEA. Alpogan indicated support for the EU-3 efforts to sway Tehran. In response to the Ambassador's enumeration of the many countries who had dismantled their nuclear capabilities, Alpogan stressed his belief that Iran was different. There was an internal struggle between the "so-called conservatives" and the reformers that had even impacted Turkish companies whose contracts for a new airport and cellular service were canceled. In his view the reformers wouldn't gain power

anytime soon.

COMMENT

¶5. (S) Alpogan's appointment as the first civilian Secretary-General in the 70-year history of Turkey's NSC is

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the latest stage in reforming this institution to comply with EU norms. Previously a military-dominated organization with significant operational responsibilities, the NSC now has more civilian members and offers advice, not edicts, to the government. The reduction in rank of the deputy SG position may suggest that the flow of information between the military and the NSC staff will be diminished; in any event, the elimination of a four-star SecGen and a three-star deputy will reduce the staff's access to military leaders.

¶6. (S) It is too early to tell how much influence the NSC staff will have on Turkey's security decision, but its new role will depend more on analysis and insight than on orders, so Alpogan's desire to add MFA personnel to the staff makes sense. Alpogan, previously Turkey's ambassador in Athens, is a reliable interlocutor with solid credentials who may prove to be an important player in shaping Turkey's foreign policy.

Post believes we should take the opportunity now to cultivate a close relationship with him and try to influence the direction of organizational reforms that Alpogan undertakes to the extent possible. Much will depend on how successful he is in adapting the institution to Turkey's changing EU circumstances. We will keep watch as Alpogan settles into his new responsibilities and we may seek a call from Dr. Rice to offer engagement as he seeks to reshape the organization. End Comment.

¶7. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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